

Even better than a snow day

Tantillo bans homework during winter vacation

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Duxbury school students received an early holiday present from the school superintendent: no homework at all for the entire winter vacation.

School superintendent Dr. Ben Tantillo issued an email last Thursday declaring that students, teachers and administrators needed a break from the stresses of daily school life and that no homework or professional work would be allowed during the 11 days of Christmas vacation. "As you know, our students are asked to do quite a bit of work throughout the school year in all grades. It has been quite obvious to me, and quite frankly, to our students and staff, that everyone is experiencing a lot of pressure and anxiety due to the workload and achievement that is expected,"



Superintendent Dr. Ben Tantillo

Tantillo wrote in his email. "It does not matter to me whether expectations are self-imposed, generated by peers, parents, staff, feds or state. We, teachers, students and administrators all need a break. "Therefore, I am directing that there be no homework or professional work to be completed or required by our students and teachers over the winter break. Any long range projects that would have been due the day after we return on January 4, the due date is moved to Friday, January 8."

Tantillo said that it had become obvious to him that the stress level in Duxbury schools was increasing too much and that something had to be done. "From the Youth Risk Behaviors survey, the overwhelming theme from parents and students is that our students are stressed and anxious," Tantillo told the Clipper, adding that he knows that teachers are also stressed with the extra demands that new educational programs and technology place on them and he's also seeing stress in his administrators, whose workload is ever increasing.

"I thought how can we do a simple thing to alleviate the stress that doesn't cost anything," he said of his idea to eliminate vacation homework.

Tantillo tweeted out his directive, which was met with approval from Duxbury parents and students.

"The students were very happy with this," he said. "The parents were overwhelmingly supportive." Educators from all over Massachusetts and from Ohio and other parts of the country also liked his idea. Tantillo also appeared on WBZ radio and WBZ channel 4 news, which picked up his Tweet.

"We've started a movement here," Tantillo said.